Member reflections with elite coaches and gymnasts: Looking back to look forward

Francesca Cavallerio, Anglia Ruskin University

Ross Wadey, St Mary's University, Twickenham

Christopher R. D. Wagstaff, University of Portsmouth

Accepted on 26 May 2019 for publication in *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*

Abstract

This paper is a confessional tale that focuses on challenges encountered during the process of conducting member reflections, and on the lessons learnt from these. Recent discussions on enhancing the rigor of qualitative research conducted from an interpretivist stance encourage the use of member reflections, rather than the previously widely adopted member checking. Yet, practical examples of *how to* use this technique are scarce in the sport, exercise and health literature. As a consequence, researchers trying to achieve rigor in their work might struggle, especially if inexperienced. In this work, the first author provides a personal narrative that explores the questions and doubts encountered when engaging with member reflections during her PhD degree. Drawing on the first author's reflective journal, a challenging situation is portrayed, recommendations for other neophyte researchers are forwarded through four main lessons learnt from it are provided: (a) lessons on rigor in qualitative research, (b) lessons on tellability and layers of understanding, (c) lessons on the importance of confrontations and knowledge exchange, and (d) lessons on relational ethics.

Keywords: confessional tale, qualitative research, member reflections, reflexivity, ethnographic creative nonfiction

Introduction

'I believe that the conversation with participants, real or imagined, about what we say about them, has much to teach us about what we are doing.' (Josselson 2011, 37)

* * *

Qualitative researchers in sport, exercise, and health research have used various techniques to evidence or support the rigour of their research. One technique that has been recently debated is the use of member checking (Smith and McGannon 2018). Defined by Creswell and Miller as 'taking data and interpretations back to participants in the study so they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account' (2000, 127), this technique was originally proposed to enhance the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Nonetheless, over time the use of member checking, together with inter-rater reliability and triangulation (in its original conceptualisation; see Flick 2018), has appeared to become part of a 'check list', whereby the more techniques used, the better the research (Hardy, Jones, and Gould 1996). By working in such an automatic and unquestioned way, researchers risk losing sight of both the philosophical assumptions underpinning qualitative research, and of the ongoing debate on rigour.

Recently, Smith and McGannon (2018) encouraged researchers in the field of sport and exercise to reflect on their use of the member checking technique. These authors highlighted the importance of maintaining a coherent alignment between the underpinning philosophical assumptions of a study and the techniques adopted to ensure quality and rigour. The process of member checking is based on ontological realism (i.e., reality exists independently of us and we can get to know it), which clashes with the ontological relativism (i.e., multiple reality exists) that qualitative researchers often assume (see Smith and McGannon 2018). Therefore, asking participants to confirm the correctness of our work is not always aligned with an interpretivist perspective. Morse (2018) suggested that while member

checking can be considered appropriate when giving back participants' interviews transcripts, it would be wrong to use this method to confirm the results of a study, as participants are missing the understanding behind the theoretical development of the analysis. In recent years, other scholars (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2013; Tracy 2010) have encouraged a shift from member checking to what has been labelled 'member reflection'. Braun and Clarke described member reflection as an approach that does not focus on participants' validation of research findings; instead it can be considered as 'an opportunity for "reflexive elaboration" of the results rather than testing whether the researcher has "got it right"' (Braun and Clarke 2013, 285).

Despite member reflection being strongly encouraged as an ontologically and epistemologically coherent way of ensuring rigour in qualitative research, guidance on how to conduct it in practice are scarce. That is, there exists little information regarding what the process of doing member reflections with participants actually entails. Tuval-Mashiach (2017) recently highlighted the importance of 'raising the curtain' on the process of doing qualitative research, by offering a transparent report of the research process. An increased transparency of the development of qualitative research has been encouraged in the field of sport, exercise and health before (Sparkes 2002). For example, van Mannen's (1988) genre of the confessional tale, has been increasingly used as a way to discuss the challenges and lessons learned in the field. Moreover, scholars' attention has shifted from an exclusive focus on the *how to* of doing qualitative research, to a more comprehensive focus on the *why*, the ethical choices behind a type of research that is not easily defined and boxed in the more classical guidelines defined by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs; Denzin and Giardina 2007). In line with this shift, Clark and Sharf (2007) encouraged researchers to share the ethical struggle behind their work, and Plummer suggested that, 'we need stories and narratives of research ethics to help fashion our own research lives' (2001, 229).

Reflexivity is often seen as one of the key features of qualitative research (Gemignani 2017), and is defined as a process of 'finding strategies to question our own attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions to strive to understand our complex roles in relation to others' (Bolton 2018, 13). The role of the researcher is central to this perspective, therefore to ensure rigour in their work scholars have mainly used three kinds of reflexivity: personal (e.g., personal reflections, on the way the researcher's identity and position influence the study), functional (e.g., analyses of the role played by the relationship between researcher and participants in the data collected and work produced), and disciplinary (e.g., a critical consideration of how perspectives in the researcher's discipline area might affect assumptions, expectations, and boundaries; Gemignani 2017; Wilkinson 1988).

The aim of this study is to contribute to the discourse on the practice of qualitative research, by providing a confessional tale of the first author's experience of using member reflection to share ethnographic findings with her participants. Working from a personal, functional, and disciplinary reflexive stance, questions asked in this confessional tale included: how did the process of conducting member reflections develop? To what extent did member reflection lead to new insights for the researchers and participants? What were the potential issues that arose during this process, and how might they have been managed? What were the main lessons learned from this reflective process? To answer these questions, first a story summarising the background of the research will be presented to provide the reader with a clearer context in which to situate the challenge encountered. The outcomes of the process of member reflections with the participants are then discussed. Finally, using extracts from the first author's reflective journal and personal correspondence, four main lessons learnt through this experience are discussed: (a) lessons on rigour in qualitative research, (b) lessons

on tellability and layers of understanding, (c) lessons on the importance of confrontations and knowledge exchange, and (d) lessons on relational ethics.

The Story

Towards the end of 2013, I (FC) began a 12-month ethnographic study in an Italian high-performance gymnastics club, with the aim to explore the psychosocial factors that influenced the development of overuse injuries in elite gymnasts ([redacted]). The study's results highlighted the existence of shared cultural norms, values, and behaviours that fostered a lack of communication between athletes and coaches, which in turn appeared to influence the occurrence and poor management of overuse injuries. An ethnographic creative nonfiction, which is a type of creative analytical practice (CAP; Richardson 2000), was chosen as the form of representation for the results. CAP refers to a process in which the author moves outside of the boundaries of conventional social scientific writing, to use the writing itself as a method of inquiry (Richardson 2000). CAP research has become more widely accepted in academia (McMahon, 2017) and has been used more frequently in the sport and exercise literature, in its different forms, such as poetry, ethnodrama, autoethnography, creative nonfiction (e.g., Cassidy, Kidman and Dudfield 2015; Culver and Werthner 2018; Douglas 2014; Lang and Pinder 2017). The aim of producing an ethnographic creative nonfiction was to present the findings in a way that could be used by non-academics (e.g., coaches, gymnasts, parents) to increase awareness of the dynamics that jeopardised athletes' well-being, and to encourage reflection and social change (Holt et al. 2017; Smith, McGannon, and Williams 2016).

A couple of years after starting the ethnography I went back to my participants, ready to share the stories with them and gather thoughts, reflections, and reactions, in order to see the effectiveness of using creative nonfiction to engage a diverse public. I was hoping to be

able to open a dialogue with the participants about the study's results, to have and provide opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, collaboration and the chance to gain an even better understanding of our findings (Braun and Clarke 2013).

Once I translated and printed the creative nonfiction from English to Italian, a hard copy of the booklet created was delivered via the club to the gymnasts and coaches who participated in the ethnography. A brief letter was enclosed in the booklet, asking these participants to read the stories in preparation for a group interview to be held a few weeks later. I then organised three focus groups to collect members' reflections, taking into account aspects of homogeneity, familiarity, and size to ensure richness of information and a comfortable, encouraging environment for the participants (Liamputtong 2011). Two of the focus groups involved the gymnasts, divided according to their status as still active (5 gymnasts) and retired (8 gymnasts), and one gathered the coaches (3). These group interviews were offered to the participants as an opportunity to share their thoughts, comments, and reflections on the stories.

Conducting Member Reflections

The two initial focus groups with the gymnasts went smoothly, providing both a confirmation that the story resonated with them, and also allowing me to add a layer of understanding to the findings, by reflecting on the changes linked to the passing of time. The story portrayed a training session during which the gymnast was in pain and decided not to inform her coach for fear of being considered not hard-working enough, but then ended up being scolded by her not-knowing coach as a consequence of her poor performance. The key aspect of the story was to portray the training session from both perspectives, gymnast's and coach's, to highlight the problematic lack of communication and consequent misunderstandings.

During the focus groups, many of the gymnasts said they identified with the story based on their experience from two years before, when they were younger. The active gymnasts recognised how their relationship with the coaches had evolved since then, and how they now felt more at ease talking to the coaches. Instead, those gymnasts who still identified themselves with the story portrayed in the creative nonfiction were the ones who had retired and had left the club, leaving behind unresolved issues with the coaches and completely detaching themselves from the gymnastics environment. Overall, I came out of the gymnasts' focus groups with a positive feeling: I was happy for the gymnasts who told me that their coach-athlete relationship had improved over time, and I felt hopeful when I thought of the reflections that my stories appeared to have triggered in the gymnasts, as reported in my reflexive journal:

> [29.03.2016] I found of particular interest the fact that they mentioned being surprised by the thoughts on the coach's mind [i.e., the story highlights how the lack of communication between coach and gymnast is the main issue in the development of overuse injuries, but also highlighted all the different worries and stressors going through the coach's mind, rather than the simplistic thoughts the gymnasts expected them to have, such as 'this girl does not care about gymnastics', 'this girl is lazy and complains in order not to work']. And I felt very happy when [Gymnast] mentioned "Well, after reading this story I think if I was in this situation I should talk.

During the focus groups with the gymnasts, I felt the rationale for adopting ethnographic creative nonfiction had reached its aim of raising awareness of the gymnastics culture and opening up a discussion that could have led to a change. The following day then, I arrived at the focus group with the coaches full of hope and positivity. A few minutes into the room, and my feelings were completely crushed. My journal reports:

[31/03/2016]. When the first response to my question about their thoughts on the stories was an angry 'The coach looks like a crazy person!' and the head coach kept questioning the honesty of the story, I felt under assault. My face was getting warmer, I knew I was all red and I hated it because that would have given me away to them. Then I told myself it was stupid to think of them as 'them', as if they were enemies. I realised that they were shocked and couldn't believe what they had read…they could only see 'the bad coach', the abusive ways, the misunderstanding of the gymnast, and did not want to have anything to do with that description. So, I tried to reply to their accusations of having invented everything in a gentle way, calmly showing and explaining where things in the story came from. Repeating that it was a snapshot of a certain moment in time and things might be different, they shouldn't think of nowadays (as [Coach 2] kept bringing up examples of gymnasts that weren't in the study). […] For those parts where they were completely shocked, I decided to offer them examples. When they kept wondering about the harsh punishment portrayed in the story, denying it ever happened in their club, I told them it was in my notes, I saw it happening. […] Then I tried to bring to life where the composite of the gymnast was coming from, giving examples from the interviews, obviously avoiding names or specific circumstances. […] I felt anxious and judged and defending myself the whole time, but at the same time I relaxed a little from the beginning, because there were moments when the coaches seemed interested in understanding. But then I felt hopeless again when they denied any responsibility in the situation. I didn't like [Head Coach]'s comment at the end, when she mentioned me doing/writing things in this way just because I had to prove that they needed a sport psychologist. […] I felt saddened by the closed-minded attitude they showed and inability to discuss their behaviour in a constructive way. They only opened-up to dialogue when the focus

moved from the coach to the gymnast, accusing them to be fake, to be the one in the wrong because they did not speak, while their perception was 'well, then there is nothing we can do.

Only once the shock of the confrontation was over, I started asking myself what the coaches' reaction meant with regard to the quality of our study. I was still a PhD student at the time, and my experience in qualitative research was fairly limited. I was extremely worried about the meaning of what had just happened with regards to my study. By then, it had been published, because I had not considered conducting member reflections before, and so I was left with several nagging questions. Did the coaches' reaction mean our study was worthless? Had I been wrong in my representation of findings, taking the gymnasts' 'side'? I remembered working so hard to avoid this, through long discussions with my supervisors looking for a way to avoid the 'bad cop/innocent victim' scenario. Had I not been rigorous enough in my data collection? Should I have used member checking and asked the coaches what they thought of the story before publishing it? Should I have changed the story to something they could better recognise as their story? My doubts were overwhelming at the time, I felt extremely confused and struggled to find an answer that provided me with a key to appreciate any information provided by the focus groups.

"Am I a 'good' researcher?" Learning about rigour and qualitative research

Smith and McGannon (2018) recently discussed the use of member checking versus member reflections when conducting qualitative research, reflecting on how such a common technique the former had become. I did not use member checking at the time of my ethnography. The relativist non-foundational perspective adopted meant that I believed there was no social reality existing in an independent way from a person's interests and purposes (Sparkes and Smith 2009); I did not believe that using member checks could have provided any means to

understand which interpretation was ‘true’, in case of contradicting versions (Sparkes and Smith 2014), because I did not believe in the existence of a single truth. Still, I believe up to that point I had not yet encountered a situation where I had to spell out these beliefs and their meaning, so that when I found myself in a ‘real-life scenario’ I was not able to find support in this. The harsh confrontation with the coaches left me out of balance – maybe because I also hate confrontations and so I am not particularly effective in managing them - and memories of the post-positivist research methods teaching I received throughout the majority of my student life started to pester me. It took me some time – and the reading of several works on qualitative research methodology – to regain confidence in my choice: not using member checks – going back to my participants with the stories and asking “Is this the right portray of what happens in your club?” – but focusing on member reflections instead, aiming to use the stories as a way to further engage with my participants to gather their thoughts and reflections on the stories.

Lessons learned

The first lesson I learnt from this experience of conducting member reflections is that researchers need to have a clear and grounded understanding of their own paradigm and the related philosophical assumptions. I believe that there is no such thing as theory-free knowledge, I accept that my research interpretations will always be influenced by my own assumptions and values, and as long as I work to conduct rigorous research through different criteria, then difference in the interpretation of results should not shock me any longer. I agree with Birt and colleagues, who suggested that,

> researchers need to be clear on the relevance and value of the method within their design; they need to have strategies for dealing with the disconfirming voice, and to have considered whether they have the resources or willingness to undertake further analysis if participants do not agree with their analysis. (Birt et al. 2016, 1806)

If I could turn back time, I would prepare myself more for the possibility of lack of agreement, I would not allow a difference in interpretations to discomfort me as much as it did, and I would try to tease this different perspective out more, to gain a better understanding of others' experiences. I think in turn this would allow me to gather richer information and potentially strengthen the power of my work to reach different individuals and encourage reflection and change.

"Should I Tell, or should I not?" Learning about Tellability and Layers of Understanding

> [12/05/2016, personal correspondence with a friend/coach] Remember when I told you about how the coaches reacted to the story from my first published study? The one you read. I am sorry I am bothering you with this, but I feel so many things have gone wrong from a relational point of view after that, that even after having put my methodological doubts to rest, I cannot stop but wonder about their interpretation of the story. Why were you – a coach yourself! - not that shocked? Why were you able to see the different perspectives, why were you able to see that the story does not paint a black-and-white-situation, just blaming the coach? Was their version of the events that different from mine? I struggle to believe so, especially given the ease with which the story resonated with the gymnasts. I feel guilty for saying this, but I wonder if the coaches felt ashamed by reading the story and did not want to recognize themselves with any part of it, more than really not identifying with it.

* * *

Rather than being taken from my reflective journal, this reflection and the questions within are taken from my personal correspondence with a close friend and gymnastics coach, who – if not a critical friend in the academic way my supervisors were – still acted as a critical person as someone who knew the gymnastics culture and its environment. Following what I

considered at the time a failed attempt at member reflection, I continued trying to understand what had happened with the coaches and where I had gone wrong. I could not understand why they were so angry and why they seem to see the coach depicted in the creative nonfiction as 'a crazy person'.

Existing studies that looked at the use of member checking with participants reflected on so called *sore spots* (see Madill and Sullivan 2018), which are described as 'interactions that have the quality of exaggeration tangled up with a fear of being wrong, can involve a strong reaction to others' words, and include a sense of suspicion between interlocutors' (Madill and Sullivan 2018, 4). In a similar way, when we do member reflections, we can encounter situations in which our participants' reflections challenge our interpretation, because they do not recognise some aspects of the narratives or stories we create. Therefore, I believe Madill and Sullivan's (2018) 'sore spots' can be used when discussing member reflection as well, and I have adopted this expression in the rest of this work.

What are possible causes of sore spots, and what causes our participants to contradict our representation of findings, at times vehemently so? One issue that narrative researchers have debated concerns the issue of 'tellability' (i.e., 'a narrative dimension that varies from rhetorical focus on a highly reportable breech of expectations and its eventual consequences to reporting relatively ordinary events', Ochs and Capps 2001, 76). Eakin discussed the precarious balance that life writers find themselves in between 'not telling the truth' and 'telling too much truth' (2004, 3). When a story's tellability moves towards what has been defined as the *upper boundary* then individuals can be quick in dismissing their identification with the story presented. The upper boundary of tellability has been described as the 'dark side' of a story (Norrick 2005), which upsets the listeners by going beyond what is believed appropriate. Stories develop over different degrees of tellability, which are the result of the interaction between the content as well as the contextual relevance for the participants

involved (Norrick 2005). Moreover, as tellability is considered a dimension of narrative, it is closely related to one's construction and maintenance of self-identity (see Gergen and Gergen 1993). Did my story challenge the identity the coaches had developed as gymnastics coaches, as caring mentors who simply wanted the best for their athletes? Was it this conflict with their sense of self that caused such anger?

Josselson (2011) reflected on the challenge of narrative researchers in finding a balance between respecting participants' subjectivity and at the same time claiming our interpretive authority as researchers. Indeed, Josselson stated, 'we write, as scholars, *for* our peers *about* our participants' (2011, 46). Hence, the challenge researchers face lies with the ethics of representation and engagement (Josselson 2007; Pelias 2007; Pickering and Kara 2017), namely researchers' 'commitment to actively engage with others through representational acts' (Pickering and Kara 2017, 1).

Lessons learned

Following reflection on the aspects of tellability of stories and representation of our participants, I believe there are two noteworthy considerations for researchers preparing to use member reflection. First, ask yourself 'what is the tellability of my story? Where is the upper boundary? Is that boundary the same for all the participants involved?' In my case, I did not realise that the story I created would clash with the coaches' representation of themselves, with their own story. If this had not been difficult enough to deal with, I also presented the results at the same time to all the participants, coaches and gymnasts. By doing this, I inadvertently asked the coaches to not only manage the emotions evoked by seeing a reflection in the mirror that they did not recognise as their own – and they seemed not to like – but I also created a situation where they knew that those gymnasts, with whom they worked with every day, were reading that same story at the same time. I can only imagine the struggle – and stress – I put them through. Would it have been as bad if I had first shared the stories

with the coaches, conducted the member reflections with them, listening to them and gathering their perspectives, before doing the same with their gymnasts, with the possibility of explaining different aspects, following their reflection? Planning the timing of the delivery of findings potentially played a key role in creating sore spots during the interaction with the coaches.

Second, by not being there in person when sharing the results, and despite having provided a short note at the beginning of the booklet, I could not address the coaches' doubts about the clarity of the findings. Josselson (2007) discussed the importance of examining the participants' assumptions of how they will be represented, and to whom, throughout the research process. Carusi (2008) identified five representational models in e-research (i.e., naturalism, isomorphism, figuralism, constructionism, and interactionalism), which move from an understanding of data as a transparent representation of reality and participants' identities, to data as the product of the researcher/participant interaction. According to Carusi, there often exists a gap between representational models adopted by participants, who often see any research and its findings as naturalistic, and researchers, who understand data in line with constructionist or interactionalist models (Carusi 2008). Bakan's (1996) work might also be used to interpret the situation that took place with the coaches. This author distinguished between *literal truths* (i.e., naturalistic, faithful representations of one's own perception of oneself) and *real truths* (i.e., representations grounded in empirical data, but using composites to protect participants' identities). I, as researcher, by not explaining effectively how the characters in the stories had been created did not prepare the coaches in our study to the understanding of an interactionalist representation. As a consequence, I believe the coaches were looking for *literal truths*, which they expected to exactly mirror their own perception of themselves working with their gymnasts. The unsuccessful management of supporting my participants through the gap identified by Carusi (2008) could have been the cause of the

negative and defensive reaction of the coaches to the creative nonfiction. Hence, it is important for researchers to promote their participants' understanding of the different ways in which data can be represented in social science, which may serve to avoid any sense of suspicion or misunderstanding, as highlighted by Madill and Sullivan (2018) and experienced by the coaches in our study.

"Everything is Information" – Learning about Confrontations and Knowledge Exchange

> [08.06.18, personal journal] *'Thank you for your presentation. I just wanted to say it's been really interesting, but I also don't think you should beat yourself up so much. I think the coaches' reaction was actually part of your results as well. It was informative'.*
>
> I cannot stop mulling over the words of another researcher following today's presentation. He has a point – as I told him in my reply to his comment – because the coaches' reaction, especially when compared to the gymnasts' one, was indeed informative.

* * *

As Madill and Sullivan (2018, 15) stated, sore spots are 'threshold moments ripe with potential'. If researchers can deal with the challenge created by these moments, the amount of information that can come out of them is great and can benefit both the research(er) and the participants. As suggested by Josselson (2011), we can learn a lot from talking to our participants about our representation of them, and this has hopefully been exemplified by the lessons conveyed in the previous sections. Yet the learning experience is not just about the researcher and the findings, instead it relates to our participants in two different ways by providing further: (a) information *on* them, and (b) information *for* them.

Information on our participants

The focus group with the coaches afforded me a further glimpse into their worlds, realising the depth of their belief in the normalisation of the situations they dealt with on a daily basis in training. I learnt how much they identified with an idea of coach and of coach-athlete relationship, which was not what the gymnasts actually experienced and what observers like me would see. I realised how they were almost blind to the 'side effects' of their behaviours and of the cultural values, almost believing in doing what they were doing for a 'greater good'. Yet the coaches' reaction to the information contained in our study, their anger and their will to erase and ignore everything contained in the stories – as they tried to tell the gymnasts that 'it was all fake' – also highlighted real issues of power in the gymnastics environment.

Following the member reflections conducted with all my participants, gymnast and coaches, I found myself comparing the feedback I received from them and I wondered what would have changed if I had gone back to them earlier on in the research process, to conduct member checking. What would have been different if rather than asking for comments and reflection, I had asked 'Is this story right'? My creative nonfiction was different from the version of the story the coaches told themselves, yet it was recognized by the gymnasts. Had I changed the story based on the coaches' feedback, would it not have just been falling under the accepted culture, the dominant narrative described by Barker-Ruchti (2008) in her (auto)ethnography of the experiences of elite gymnasts? When discussing the emergence of conflicting standpoints between researcher's and participants' interpretation of findings, Bradshaw (2001, 206) highlighted the risk of researchers getting 'too close' and being effectively silenced by participants if member checking is adopted.

Issues of power in conducting qualitative research are often discussed in the literature (e.g., Bradshaw 2001; Karnieri-Millen, Strier, and Pessach 2009), but up to the time of completing my ethnography I had only read about the power held by the researcher, and how

it meant having to be attentive and caring towards the participants, especially when working with children and teenagers (e.g., Heary and Hennessy 2002). No thought had been given to the potential power held by the participants, in case of the adoption of methods like member checking. As highlighted by Thomas (2017), member checks allow participants to censor that information that illuminates negative aspects related to the organisation (e.g., the gymnastics club's culture and climate, the broader gymnastics sport environment), and protect those people who are already in a position of power. At the time, I was not completely aware of my choice, but I know now that by deciding against member checking, I was not only aligning to my philosophical beliefs; I was also being critical towards what I recognised as a dangerous normalised risk culture (Nixon 1993).

Information for our participants

As qualitative researchers, we often set out to conduct our studies with aims that tend to differ from our quantitative colleagues; where they want to measure and predict phenomena, we want to impact society, culture, social justice (Lincoln and Denzin 2018). Cho and Trent (2006) illuminate how one way of achieving this is to explore the concept of *transformative validity*, which entails judging the quality of research by the way in which it promotes change. Member reflection offers this opportunity, as when we go back to our participants to share our findings, by engaging in a dialogue with them, we can actually raise awareness and encourage change (Braun and Clarke 2013). Creative analytical practices themselves are used as ways to represent research findings for the exact same reason: storytelling, in its different forms (e.g., creative nonfiction, poetry, songs, drama) has the potential to evoke feelings and emotions, which in turn are powerful tools to inspire self-reflection, discussion, and change (Smith, McGannon, and Williams 2016).

Sometimes the reflective aspect and the potential for change arise in an uncomplicated way, as I experienced in the focus groups with the gymnasts, when one of them stated that

'…after reading this story I think if I was in this situation I should talk'. On the other hand, by dealing with sore spots researchers have a chance to use these moments fruitfully for knowledge exchange. As Madill and Sullivan (2018) explained, the researcher's response to a participant critiquing the representation and interpretation of findings is paramount. These authors list two main responses that researchers can adopt: exploring the issue with the participant or attempt an expert close (i.e., passing over of the issue or reframing in the researcher's terms; Madill and Sullivan 2018, 15). When researchers feel unsettled by the critique of their analysis, they might 'hide' behind academic responses to their participant's attempt to discuss their representation. On the other hand, if a researcher aims to achieve a real change through their work, being able to engage in a constructive dialogue with their participant becomes the key to illuminating what could be the participant's 'blind spots' (e.g., normalised behaviours accepted in the gymnastics culture, in my case) and encourage reflection.

Lessons learned

If the aim of one's research is to inspire change, we as researchers must be prepared for the divergent reactions that change may cause. In psychology, the word 'change' often goes together with the idea of 'crisis' (e.g., Calhoun and Tedeschi 2006). Therefore, we need to be prepared to encounter resistance to change among our participants, when our representation might constitute a change from their usual worldview or identity. Not everyone enjoys change, as it involves reframing and reimagining things, ideas, situations, and – most of all – our own selves, which is rarely easy. Based on this consideration, the main lesson learned is the importance for researchers to develop what could be called 'confrontation' skills, or perhaps 'conflict management' skills. Indeed, one needs not to be afraid of confrontations and of different ideas. When it comes to seeking reflections on our own research though, one must remain open to mixed reactions to it, and the ability to distance ourselves from our work. A

lack of trust in one's work – even when expressed closely to how it happened in my case – should not make us immediately assume it is unworthy but should be used as a possibility to explore different perspectives and interpretations. A participant attacking one's findings is not an attack to one's own self. Conversely, researchers need to keep in mind that our participants might have the perception that we are attacking and judging *them*. Therefore, it is important that researchers learn how to avoid confirming their fear, how to accept participants' anger without becoming angry on our part, and how to avoid hiding behind what Madill and Sullivan (2018) called the 'expert close'. Instead, we should strive to engage with our participants' doubts, anger, and questions, and to maintain integrity regardless of the difficulty of the conversation.

There is a need for the researcher to stand up to the purpose they claim for their research. If we argue that we hope for our research to promote change, raise awareness, provoke discussion, then we need to be ready to face both the positive and the negative consequences of our aims. Using reflexivity to analyse these difficult interactions will help us to illuminate further information on the phenomena we investigate and enable us to better unveil complex and challenging layers of understanding (Josselson 2011).

"Am I a Bad Person?" Learning about Relational Ethics

Months after conducting the focus groups to gather members' reflection, I was still tormented by the memory of the meeting with the coaches, by the way I felt, and by its consequences: decreased trust in the relationship with the coaches, with whom I had been working as a practitioner, an overall feeling of uneasiness when thinking about our study, and also – on a very personal level – the loss of my friendship with one of the coaches involved in the study. In my reflective journal entries during those months I noted:

[28/11/2016] I cannot stop thinking about the focus group with the coaches. I am more and more convinced that if it had only been a matter of methodology, of 'doing research', I would have by now accepted what happened, read some insightful works on the topic, and made peace with the whole experience. But it is not easy to be rational when emotions are involved. Despite all this time, there is a voice in my head that keeps saying 'You cannot have been so perfectly ethical if someone got hurt'. Not just one person. Two. Me. And her. The researcher, and the participant. The person who I would have never wanted to hurt. The 'good' coach. So good that she was the only one who took the story I wrote and reflected on it, blaming herself, not realising that she was not the main coach represented in my composite portrayal. What did I do to protect her? Nothing, unfortunately. Because for me it was obvious. I had worked hard to try and portray the two characters (i.e., the coach and the gymnast) as multifaceted, sketched in numerous shades, not a simple black and white portrayal. I wanted to avoid binary thinking: the gymnast and the coach, the victim and the bully. That was not what I observed, and it was not what I wanted to represent. Yet despite my efforts, that is what my friend saw and, maybe due to a bit of low self-confidence, she was not able to differentiate hers and others' traits in the composite character of the coach. That is when our friendship ended. No apology was enough. I had struck a chord, and nothing seemed good enough to bring things back to how they were, back to normal.

'Is the truth always beneficial? No. Can it also be harmful? Yes. Furthermore, multiple conceptions of truth or "right" may, at times, come into direct conflict' (Clark and Sharf 2007, 400). Clark and Sharf (2007) illuminate the problem of conscience that comes with sharing (qualitative) research findings. I never thought I could encounter such a problem, but I had never really dwelled on advanced questions of ethics before. My undergraduate and postgraduate studies, with their post-positivist perspective, and my experience as an intern in

the Department of Psychology of my University in Italy, never really prompted me to reflect on such questions. Neither did the ethics process I had to go through at the beginning of my PhD. I had a simple, general notion of ethics, very much based on personal values of doing no harm and be kind to people (Ellis 2007a). I am pained to admit that the notion of relational ethics has only been a recent discovery, thanks to a reviewer's comment on another study I worked on.

Slattery and Rapp defined relational ethics as what a researcher needs to do in order to be 'true to one's character and responsible for one's action and their consequences on others' (2003, 55). Ellis (2007b) developed the concept of relational ethics, noting how the balance between honouring the relationship with our participants, and at the same time remaining true to our perception of the story, is an extremely difficult ethical issue. Several researchers addressed this issue in different ways: they did not publish the story, adopted pseudonyms or no names at all for participants and locations, published without participants' approval or seeking approval only after publication (Ellis 2007b). I decided to fictionalise the story I reported, creating composite characters so that it was impossible to recognise specific individuals (Smith, McGannon, and Williams 2016). Once the story was fictionalised, I did not spend more time worrying about it. Similar to what Ellis (2007a, 8) says, 'I sometimes found myself thinking that because most of the people with whom I interacted couldn't read, they would never see what I had written anyway'. In my case, rather than an alphabetisation problem, I knew there was a language barrier. The majority of my participants did not speak English, or not to a level that would have made reading my creative nonfiction a nice and stress-free experience for them. I got so used to not worrying about it – and so convinced that the attention paid to the writing the coach's character was clear and enough for everyone – that I did not think of any possible issue in sharing the story even when I finally translated it into Italian.

When advocating for the importance of transparency in qualitative research, Tuval-Mashiach (2017) emphasised the importance of the researchers' responsibility to their readers when communicating the procedures related to the research process. In the case of communicating the research findings, participants from my ethnography were also my readers, and I should have taken better care in communicating my research findings. Staying true to my philosophical assumptions meant choosing not to conduct any member checking, but it did not have to mean simply 'throwing' my creative nonfiction at them. Pelias (2007) suggests that when it comes to matters of performative writing and the ethical adage of doing no harm, empathy is the fundamental tool we have for our ethical responsibility. Looking back, I see that my behaviour lacked empathy. Despite knowing that people can have different perceptions of the same situation, I did not apply this knowledge to my case and just assumed the coaches would have perceived the story in the same way I did. Bochner (2007) mentions having to ask ourselves questions of loyalty and betrayal when it comes to ethics and to our license of describing others, and I can see that in a way – in the coaches' eyes at least - I made a choice: I betrayed them and was loyal to the gymnasts. This was their understanding of the story. It might not have been my intention, but because of the way I shared my findings, I was unable to influence their perceptions or prepare them.

On a personal level, this situation backfired in terms of my personal friendship. Ellis (2007a) suggested that in ethnographic research one can be friendly but cannot really be a friend. 'The problem comes not from being friends with participants but from acting as a friend yet not living up to the obligations of friendship' (Ellis 2007a, 10). Despite repeated apologies to my friend, there was no going back. She had lost trust in me and in our friendship, she felt betrayed, and just decided that our relationship was not worth a second chance.

‘Friendship as a method’ has been advocated by some authors (e.g., Owton and Allen-Collinson 2014; Tillman-Healy 2003). This method requires to put friendships from the fieldwork to be on par with the research project; the roles of researcher and of friend should weave into each other, and participants should be actively part of the research process (Tillman-Healy 2003). Adopting friendship as a method means to engage with the challenge of maintaining a dialogical relationship, as well as to have an ethic of care, which encourages emotion and empathy (Owton and Allen-Collinson 2014). Because the interpersonal bond that characterises friendship entails a constant management of dialectical tensions (e.g., between affection and instrumentality, or judgement and acceptance; Rawlins 1992), adopting friendship as a method requires an ongoing and sustained reflexive process (Tillman-Healey 2003). This reflexive process requires a constant level of self-scrutiny (Ellis 2007a; Tillman-Healey 2003), which might be difficult to reach or maintain successfully. Thinking back of my experience during the ethnography, I believe I might have at some point ended up in a friendship as a method field – due to the prolonged engagement in the field - but by not being aware of that I was unsuccessful in coping with the challenges demanded by such a methodology.

Lessons learned

An American college football coach once said that ‘When you make a mistake, there are only three things you should ever do about it: admit it, learn from it, and don't repeat it’ (Bryant, King, and King 2001). The concept of learning from mistakes is common, and the idea that the bigger the mistake is, the more the learning will be is widely accepted. Therefore, I can say without any doubt that the different aspects of relational ethics discovered as a consequence of the loss of a friend, who was also a participant in the study, constitute the most profound lesson learned in my experience as a researcher. Somehow, I know I was ‘lucky’ as it happened at the beginning of my career, and I strongly encourage early career

researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of relational ethics, which is often underestimated or even ignored by institutional ethics boards (Denzin and Giardina 2007). From a personal perspective, I regret not having discovered and made good use of relational ethics in my sharing of the research findings. The greatest lesson learned for me resonates with Ellis' words:

> I regret hurting any of my participants; however, I have to say that, in hind- sight, I don't regret being confronted by the Fishneckers' wrath. Their responses made me rethink how I should do research and live my life. I have become a better researcher and teacher as a result. I would have trouble now doing research on anyone, though I would be happy doing research with any number of people and communities in an egalitarian participative relationship. (Ellis 2007a, 13)

'If I could turn back time…': Suggestions for researchers to consider when conducting member reflections

a) People's responses to researchers' interpretation of research findings are always out of the researchers' control.
b) Learn to live with uncertainty when it comes to people's responses to your research, in line with point (a).
c) Before you share your findings, stop and ask yourself what is at stake for your participants. Appreciating the answer to this question will prepare you to deal with different responses.
d) Remaining respectful and empathic towards your participants is fundamental. But in reflecting on your participants' feelings, do not lose sight of the valuable contribution and rigor of your work. If your work resonates with others, one participant's perspective is not the only truth of importance.

Conclusion

The aim of this work was to foster reflexivity in qualitative research by providing a confessional tale of my own experience of engaging in member reflections with the participants from my ethnographic study. By sharing the journey through my methodological and ethical struggle, I hope I can offer a useful tool for future qualitative researchers, raising awareness of challenges and questions that can be encountered when doing research in the field (Clark and Sharf 2007; Tuval-Mashiach 2017). Reaching a clear understanding of one's own ontological and epistemological philosophical assumptions is paramount for a researcher. Being able to provide a rationale for one's methodological choices, can help avoiding the fear of 'having got it wrong', 'not saying the truth', and other similar insecurities that can stem from confusing paradigms and the requirements to ensure rigorous research. Related to this understanding is also the awareness that participants will often judge our representation of them through different representational models, and therefore as researchers we need to pay attention in bridging the gap and managing expectations. In line with what Josselson stated, we need to 'both respect their [participants'] subjectivity and to claim our interpretive authority' (2011, 46). Finally, member reflection should not be taken for granted as just 'the final bit' of a study. Like the rest of a research project, the process of member reflection requires careful planning. Based on my experience, two aspects related to planning need to be taken particularly in consideration: (a) the context in which data is shared with the participants, and (b) the timing of the reflection. By paying attention to these aspects, we are recognizing our participants as something more than 'subjects of our research', and in doing so we are taking the first steps towards a relational ethics (Ellis 2007a).

Although a method with potential challenges, there are several strengths that member reflections can provide. First, participants' reactions to results can provide information on the generalizability of the study's findings. Smith explains how naturalistic generalisability

happens ‘when the research resonates with the reader’s personal engagement in life’s affairs or vicarious, often tacit, experiences’ (2018, 140). The different reaction of the participants to the creative nonfiction gathered through member reflections, rather than invalidating the stories, allowed for a deeper analysis and understanding of the meaning of the findings (cf. Smith and Sparkes 2011). Secondly, with regard to the use of member reflections as a ‘tool’ to seek rigor and quality in qualitative research, one might wonder when it is most appropriate to use it. Our intention is not to create a new ‘interpretive research checklist’, nonetheless, it is worth reflecting on the recent developments of the discussion on triangulation. Flick (2018) discusses the evolution of triangulation as a process to enhance rigor, from what he calls ‘version 1.0’ (i.e., a validation strategy) to the more recent ‘version 3.0’, which refers to researchers taking different perspectives applied equally on an issue under study. The process conducted in this way will include investigator, theory, methodological, and data triangulation, which will in turn provide different levels of knowledge (Flick, 2008). Further, it could be possible to suggest the conceptualisation of a ‘version 4.0’ of triangulation, which sees member reflections as an important process, which not only builds on the different perspectives discussed in version 3.0, but also focuses on enhancing aspects related to participatory research. This shift can be achieved by stepping away from a ‘simple’ investigator triangulation and rejecting taken-for-granted power relationships between researchers and participants, to allow a more deeply rooted co-construction of meaning, which can develop in a coherent way from the social constructionist assumptions of the underpinning paradigm. Moving towards such an approach will also have the potential to ease some of the challenges listed above, as the co-construction of meaning and different interpretations will be part of the triangulation approach itself.

In conclusion, I would like to add a final thought related to the fundamental role of reflexivity as (qualitative) researchers and on the usefulness of keeping a reflective journal

throughout the research process. The narrative parts of this work offered me a chance to become aware of my 'writing self', as well as of the research process. The act of writing as a method of discovery (Richardson 2000) allows one to recognize the reasons behind methodological choices and participants' reactions, providing an academic rationale to deal with the 'disconfirming voices' (Birt et al. 2016, 1806). I am far from being an experienced researcher, but through this process I developed a better understanding of conducting member reflections, and I hope the lessons learned can be useful for future researchers too.

References

Bakan, D. 1996. "Some Reflections About Narrative Research and Hurt and Harm". In *Ethics and Process in the Narrative Study of Lives*, edited by R. Josselson, 3-8. London: Sage.

Barker-Ruchti, N. 2008. "'They Must Be Working Hard': An (Auto-)Ethnography Account of Women's Artistic Gymnastics". *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies* 8 (3): 372-380. doi: 10.1177/1532708607310799

Birt, L., S. Scott, D. Cavers, C. Campbell, and F. Walter. 2016. "Member Checking: A Tool to Enhance Trustworthiness or Merely a Nod to Validation?" *Qualitative Health Research* 26 (13): 1802–1811. doi: 10.1177/1049732316654870

Bochner, A. P. 2007. "Notes Toward an Ethics of Memory in Autoethnographic Inquiry". In *Ethical Futures in Qualitative Research,* edited by N. K. Denzin and M. D. Giardina, 196-208. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Bolton, G. 2018. *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development.* 5th ed. London: Sage.

Bradshaw, M. 2001. "Contracts and Member Checks in Qualitative Research in Human Geography: Reason for Caution?" *Area,* 33: 202–211. doi: 10.1111/1475-4762.00023

Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2013. *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. London: Sage.

Bryant, P. W., C. King, and H. T. King. 2001. *I Ain't Never Been Nothing but a Winner: Coach Paul Bear Bryant's 323 Greatest Quotes About Success, On and Off the Football Field*. Hendersonville, TN: Towlehouse Publishing Company.

Calhoun, L., and R. Tedeschi, eds. 2006. *Handbook of Posttraumatic Growth: Research and Practice.* London: Routledge.

Cassidy, T., L. Kidman, and O. Dudfield. 2015. "Insights into the Process of Creating a Coach Development Programme: The Opportunities and Challenges of Ethnodrama". *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 7 (5): 589-605. doi: 10.1080/2159676X.2015.1012545

Carusi, A. 2008. "Data as Representation: Beyond Anonymity in E-Research Ethics". *International Journal of Internet Research Ethics,* 1: 37-65.

[redacted]

Cho, J., and A. Trent. 2006. "Validity in Qualitative Research Revisited". *Qualitative Research,* 6: 319– 340. doi: 10.1177/1468794106065006

Clark, M. C., and B. F. Sharf. 2007. "The Dark Side of Truth(s). Ethical Dilemmas in Researching the Personal". *Qualitative Inquiry,* 13 (3): 399-416. doi: 10.1177/1077800406297662

Creswell, J. W., and D. L. Miller. 2000. "Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry". *Theory into Practice,* 39 (3): 124-130. doi: 10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Culver, D. M., and P. Werthner. 2018. "Voices: Para Athletes Speak". *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health,* 10 (2): 167-175. doi: 10.1080/2159676X.2017.1393004

Denzin, N. K., and M. D. Giardina. eds. 2007. *Ethical Futures in Qualitative Research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Douglas, K. 2014. "Challenging Interpretive Privilege in Elite and Professional Sport: One [Athlete's] Story, Revised, Reshaped and Reclaimed". *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health,* 6 (2): 220-243. doi: 10.1080/2159676X.2013.858369

Eakin, P. J. ed. 2004. *The Ethics of Life Writing*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ellis, C. 2007a. “Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in Research with Intimate Others”. *Qualitative inquiry,* 13 (1): 3-29. doi: 10.1177/1077800406294947

Ellis, C. 2007b. “‘I Just Want to Tell MY Story’: Mentoring Students About Relational Ethics in Writing About Intimate Others”. In *Ethical Futures of Qualitative Research: Decolonizing the Politics of Knowledge,* edited by N. Denzin and M. D. Giardina, 209-227. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Flick, U. 2008. *Managing quality in qualitative research.* London: Sage.

Flick, U. 2018. “Triangulation”. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin, and Y. S. Lincoln, 444-461. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gemignani, M. 2017. “Toward a Critical Reflexivity in Qualitative Inquiry: Relational and Posthumanist Reflections on Realism, Researcher’s Centrality, and Representationalism in Reflexivity”. *Qualitative Psychology,* 4 (2): 185-198. doi: 10.1037/qup0000070

Gergen, M. M., and K. J. Gergen. 1993. “Narratives of the Gendered Body in Popular Autobiography”. *The Narrative Study of Lives,* 1: 191-218.

Hardy, L., J. G. Jones, and D. Gould. 1996. *Understanding Psychological Preparation for Sport: Theory and Practice of Elite Performers.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Heary, C., and E. Hennessy. 2002. “The Use of Focus Group Interviews in Paediatric Health Care Research”. *Journal of Paediatric Psychology,* 27: 47-57. doi: 10.1093/jpepsy/27.1.47

Holt, N. L., M. Camiré, K. A. Tamminen, K. Pankow, S. R. Pynn, L. Strachan, D. J. MacDonald, and J. Fraser-Thomas. 2017. “PYDSportNET: A Knowledge Translation Project Bridging Gaps Between Research and Practice in Youth Sport”. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action,* 9 (2): 132-146. doi:10.1080/21520704.2017.1388893

Josselson, R. 2007. “The Ethical Attitude in Narrative Research: Principles and Practicalities”. In *The Handbook of Narrative Inquiry,* edited by D. J. Clandinin, 537-567. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Josselson, R. 2011. “‘Bet You Think This Song Is About You: Whose Narrative Is It in Narrative Research?” *Narrative Works: Issues, Investigations, & Interventions*, 1: 33–51.

Karnieli-Miller, O., R. Strier, and L. Pessach. 2008. “Power Relations in Qualitative Research”. *Qualitative Health Research,* 19 (2): 279–289. doi:10.1177/1049732308329306

Lang, M., and S. Pinder. 2017. “Telling (Dangerous) Stories: A Narrative Account of a Youth Coach’s Experience of an Unfounded Allegation of Child Abuse”. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health,* 9 (1): 99-110. doi: 10.1080/2159676X.2016.1246469

Liamputtong, P. 2011. *Focus Group Methodology: Principles and Practice*. London: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., and N. K. Denzin. 2018. “Epilogue: Toward a ‘Refunctioned Ethnography’”. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin, and Y. S. Lincoln, 923-928. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., and E. G. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Madill, A., and P. Sullivan. 2018. “Mirrors, Portraits, and Member Checking: Managing Difficult Moments of Knowledge Exchange in the Social Sciences”. *Qualitative Psychology,* 5 (3): 321-339. doi: 10.1037/qup0000089

McMahon, J. 2017. Creative Analytical Practices. In Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, edited by B. Smith and A. C. Sparkes, 302-315. London: Routledge.

Morse, J. 2018. Reframing Rigor in Qualitative Inquiry. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin, and Y. S. Lincoln, 796-817. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nixon, H. L. 1993. "Accepting the Risks of Pain and Injury in Sports: Mediated Cultural Influences on Playing Hurt". *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 10 (2): 183- 196. doi: 10.1123/ssj.10.2.183

Norrick, N. R. 2005. "The Dark Side of Tellability". *Narrative Inquiry,* 15 (2): 323-343. doi: 10.1075/ni.15.2.07nor

Ochs, E., and L. Capps. 2001. *Living Narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Owton, H., and J. Allen Collinson. 2013. "Close but Not Too Close". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 43 (3): 283–305. doi: 10.1177/0891241613495410

Pelias, R. J. 2007. "Performative Writing: The Ethics of Representation in Form and Body". In *Ethical Futures of Qualitative Research: Decolonizing the Politics of Knowledge,* edited by N. Denzin and M. D. Giardina, 181-196. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Pickering, L. and H. Kara. 2017. "Presenting and Representing Others: Towards an Ethics of Engagement". *International Journal of Social Research Methodology.* 20 (3): 299-309. doi: 10.1080/13645579.2017.1287875

Plummer, K. 2001. *Documents of Life 2.* London: Sage.

Rawlins, W. K. 1992. *Friendship Matters: Communication, Dialectics and the Life Course*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Richardson, L. 2000. Writing: A Method of Inquiry. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* edited by N. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Slattery, P., and D. Rapp. 2003. *Ethics and the Foundations of Education: Teaching Convictions in a Postmodern World*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Smith, B. 2018. “Generalizability in Qualitative Research: Misunderstandings, Opportunities and Recommendations for the Sport and Exercise Sciences”. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10 (1): 137-149. doi: 10.1080/2159676X.2017.1393221

Smith, B., and K. R. McGannon. 2018. “Developing Rigor in Qualitative Research: Problems and Opportunities within Sport and Exercise Psychology”. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology,* 11 (1): 101-121. doi: 10.1080/1750984X.2017.1317357

Smith, B., K. R. McGannon, and T. Williams. 2016. “Ethnographic Creative Non- Fiction: Exploring the What’s, Why’s and How’s”. In *Ethnographies in Sport and Exercise Research*, edited by G. Molnar and L. Purdy, 59-73. London: Routledge.

Smith, B. and A. C. Sparkes. 2011. “Multiple Responses to a Chaos Narrative”. *Health: an Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness & Medicine*, 15, 38–53. doi: 10.1177/1363459309360782

Sparkes, A. C. 2002. *Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Activity: A Qualitative Journey*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Press.

Sparkes, A. C., and B. Smith. 2009. “Judging the Quality of Qualitative Inquiry: Criteriology and Relativism in Action”. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise,* 10 (5): 491-497. doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2009.02.006

Sparkes, A.C., and B. Smith. 2014. *Qualitative Research Methods in Sport, Exercise and Health*. New York: Routledge.

Thomas, D. R. 2017. “Feedback from Research Participants: Are Member Checks Useful in Qualitative Research?” *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 14 (1): 23–41. doi: 10.1080/14780887.2016.1219435

Tillmann-Healy, L. M. 2003. “Friendship as Method”. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 9: 729-749. doi: 10.1177/1077800403254894

Tracy, S. J. 2010. “Qualitative Quality: Eight “Big-tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research”. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 16 (10): 837-851. doi: 10.1177/1077800410383121

Tuval-Mashiach, R. 2017. “Raising the Curtain: The Importance of Transparency in Qualitative Research”. *Qualitative Psychology,* 4 (2): 126–138. doi: 10.1037/qup0000062

van Maanen, J. 1988. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wilkinson, S. 1988. “The Role of Reflexivity in Feminist Psychology”. *Women’s Studies International Forum,* 11 (5): 493-502.